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ALBERTA OPPORTUNITY COMPANY

AOC Today

January 1992

1991 Entrepreneurs Conference an Overwhelming Success

If the enthusiasm seen at the 1991 Entrepreneurs Conference in Calgary is anything to go by, small business is indeed alive and well in Alberta.

More than 350 enterprising Albertans met Sept. 20 - 22 at the Westin Hotel to network and hone their business skills at what has been described as AOC's most successful conference yet.

"Despite poor economic times, it's obvious people are still interested in pursuing business in Alberta," says AOC President Roy Parker.

"The turnout and the positive response at our conference was absolutely overwhelming. Never before have I experienced such a highly-charged atmosphere where business-oriented individuals were so intent on learning and exchanging information."

Delegates had the unique opportunity to hear from Alan Ashton, co-founder and president of WordPerfect Corporation. In only 12 years, the prominent software design and sales company grew from a two-man operation to a vast organization with annual sales of $452 million.

Another highlight of the conference was an address by the Honourable Michael Wilson, Minister of Industry, Science and Technology. He also presented the prestigious Parlee McLaws Entrepreneur of the Year Award to Calgary businessman Lou MacEachern.

"The calibre of our speakers has been maintained with every conference we've had," says Balan Mathews, Director of Corporate Marketing for AOC.

"This event has gained significant credibility over the past five years and we're looking forward to providing our attendees with an even better slate of presenters at our Edmonton conference in 1992."

Mathews adds AOC will expand its educational programs this year to include one-day conferences in Fort McMurray, Peace River, Grande Prairie, Medicine Hat, Lethbridge, Calgary and Red Deer on a range of current business topics.

Honourable Michael Wilson and AOC President Roy Parker

At Alberta Opportunity Company, entrepreneurs are our biggest resource. Your enterprising spirit and determination to win at business are the foundation of our entire operation.

Over the years, we have strived to provide you with the commercial financing you need to help meet your goals. We've also endeavoured to help sustain your business investments by offering sound management advice and educational opportunities.

All of our clients have distinct situations and different needs. You come from diverse backgrounds and are involved in a vast range of ventures, from high-end manufacturing to sales and service. But despite your contrasts, you all have a common bond — entrepreneurship. And it is with this in mind that we bring you AOC Today, *your link to each other and your connection to small business in Alberta.*

Here, every second month, is where you'll learn more about our activities, read about fellow entrepreneurs and find valuable business tips.

We are excited about kicking off 1992 with our very first issue of AOC Today *and encourage your comments to help make this publication the best that it can be. We look forward to hearing from you.*

R. W. Parker

R. W. Parker
President and CEO
Alberta Opportunity Company

Education is an important aspect of entrepreneurship

Enterprise Seminars 1992

January	8	Hinton
	15	Edmonton
	22	Ponoka
	29	Rocky Mountain House
February	12	Olds
	19	Stettler
	26	Hanna
March	4	Red Deer
	11	Edson
	18	Canmore
	25	Brooks
April	1	Calgary
	8	High River
	15	Crowsnest Pass
	22	Lethbridge
	29	Medicine Hat
May	6	Wainwright
	13	Lloydminster
	20	Bonnyville
	27	St. Paul

Small Business Seminars Being Held Across Alberta

An innovative program launched in late 1991 is giving entrepreneurs across Alberta the opportunity to learn valuable business basics.

AOC, Alberta Economic Development and Trade and Statistics Canada have joined forces to present business education seminars throughout the province. Altogether, 25 Enterprise sessions will be staged through May 1992.

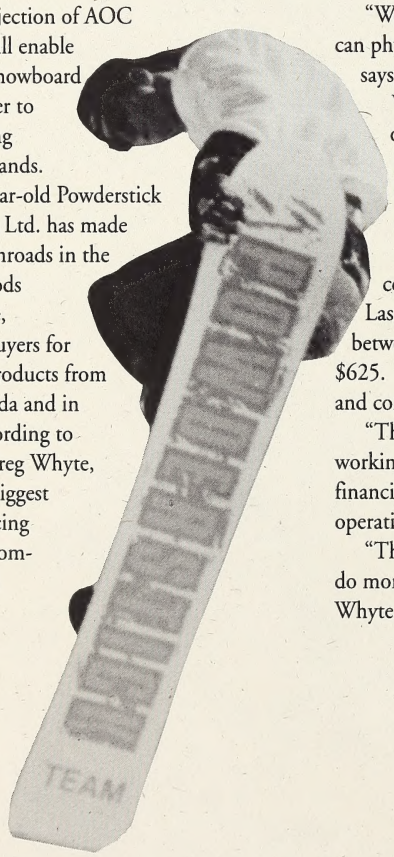
The three-hour evening seminars, aimed at prospective and experienced business owners, feature presentations on business planning, market research and financing.

The program kicked off November 6 in Camrose and sessions have been held in Whitecourt, Vegreville, Grande Prairie and Peace River. Entrepreneurs can register for upcoming seminars by calling AOC at 1-800-642-3811. The cost is $35 per session.

Snowboard Company Making Tracks in Marketplace

An injection of AOC financing will enable a Calgary snowboard manufacturer to meet growing market demands.

Seven-year-old Powderstick Snowboards Ltd. has made impressive inroads in the sporting goods market place, attracting buyers for its trendy products from across Canada and in Japan. According to co-owner Greg Whyte, one of the biggest obstacles facing the young company is cash flow.



"We're getting a lot more demand than what we can physically build. We know we can't meet it," he says.

Whyte, 25, started the manufacturing operation with partner Lindsay Rogers in 1984, turning what was a hobby into a money-making venture. The firm has evolved into a "miniature ski factory" in northeast Calgary, producing its own snowboards and similar products for companies in Canada and the United States.

Last year, Powderstick expected to manufacture between 1,500 and 2,000 snowboards which retail for $625. Whyte forecast annual sales of up to $1 million and continued growth in upcoming years.

"The business is limited only by the amount of working capital we can get," he says, adding AOC financing will play a vital role in Powderstick's operations this spring.

"This will allow us to do more export marketing, do more shipping and really move ahead," explains Whyte.

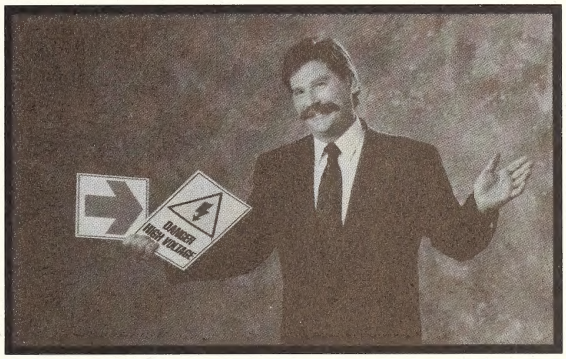
Flying high with Powderstick

Venture Funding Helping Edmonton Company Shine

An Edmonton company is lighting its way to success through making innovative use of a phosphorous substance with strong illuminating capabilities.

Safety Glow Canada (1988) Ltd. is making promising progress in manufacturing and marketing glow-in-the-dark safety signage and building materials. Boyd English was so impressed with the potential of Phospho Light products that he traded in his 12-year commercial real estate career to become president of the Edmonton-based company.

"I continued to invest in the company to the point where I got past what I was able to do with it and approached AOC," says English.



Safety Glow President Boyd English

Venture funding enabled the company to embark on its product launch and step up marketing activities.

Phospho Light products have been well-received internationally, with distributors located in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand and Denmark. English also plans to pursue markets in Ireland and Chile.

"We've actually had more successes abroad in some cases than we've had locally but we're looking for the Canadian market to be a strong foothold in what we're doing."

To help expand Phospho Light's national sales, English took advantage of AOC's consulting services. A new marketing brochure was developed and is currently being distributed throughout Canada and the U.S.

"Sales have definitely gone up since we've introduced it. With Phospho Light, I think it's just recognition and getting people to understand the concept of it," says English.

"I think our marketing is in place but we have lots of merchandising to do. That's going to take some time."

What is Venture Funding?

AOC's Venture Funding Division was established in 1987 to invest in leading-edge companies which have the potential to significantly contribute to Alberta's economy.

Investments are made in firms which have their product developed but require financing for production facilities, market development or expansion. Priority is given to high-tech companies, but manufacturing concerns, forest products and tourism enterprises are also considered.

To qualify for funding, which can range from $250,000 to upwards of $1.5 million, companies must demonstrate strong leadership and have excellent growth potential.

AOC's venture portfolio currently consists of 20 businesses focusing on innovative projects varying from hydroponic vegetable production to computer software.

Loan Application Analysis Process Improved

New software being installed at AOC's 12 branch offices will provide lending officers with more detailed information for determining the feasibility of business proposals.

The Statistics Canada program features current data which can be used to verify the market trend for products and services in Alberta. The use of postal codes makes it possible to target specific areas of the province, for more precise analysis.

"This will help our people do more effective market research before making a loan and get an accurate feel for the marketplace," says Jim Anderson, AOC's Vice President, Lending.

The software includes information pertaining to age groups, income levels, marital status, employment and Family Allowance recipients.

"If a client wants to open an upscale children's wear store, this kind of data can play a key role in helping pinpoint if the market even exists and what the chances for success are," explains Anderson.

To date, the software has been installed at AOC's offices in Edmonton, Grande Prairie and Peace River. The program will be introduced to the remaining branches over the upcoming months.

While use of the data will be limited to internal operations, the public can access the same information for business research by contacting the offices of Statistics Canada at 1-800-282-3907 (Northern Alberta) or 1-800-472-9708 (Southern Alberta).

Call Us ...

AOC Today was created to meet your information needs. If there's a business issue you want to see addressed, facts you need to know or a story you'd like us to share, call us! We've got an edition of 'Portraits of Canada', highlighting some of our nation's most beautiful scenes, for the best suggestion we receive.

We also want to help you in your entrepreneurial endeavours. If you're looking for business partners, seeking an investment opportunity or trying to sell your own operation, call us! We'll make an effort to pass your needs onto our readership.

Contact

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Hats Off!

AOC recently honored two of its board members who retired last spring after six years of service.

Walter Holowack of Grande Cache and Wayne Watts of Wainwright made significant contributions to the direction of AOC which expanded during their tenure to include Venture and Seed Funding divisions. In addition to participating in regular board activities, Holowack was a member of the public relations and conference committees, while Watts was involved with audit and budget matters, tourism-related concerns and seed and venture funding issues.

Wayne Watts and Walter Holowack

For the past 22 years, Holowack has operated a local clothing business. Watts owns a service station, convenience store and car rental outlet in Wainwright. He recently relocated to Saskatoon where he is an advisor of community business initiatives for the Federal Business Development Bank.

Welcome Aboard!

Four new appointees are adding to the dynamics of AOC's Board of Directors.

Ronald Bell of Sherwood Park is Vice President of Marketing and Development at MacLab Enterprises, a real estate development and management company which is also involved in venture capital investments and the oil and gas industry.

Keith DeArmond is president and general manager of three inter-related real estate companies with offices in Lethbridge and Claresholm.

Diane Hunter is a former alderman involved with the University of Calgary's Management Advisory Committee and Executive Development Program for Women.

George Renner is president of The Rosery Florist Ltd. which operates in two locations in Medicine Hat. He is actively involved in several local service organizations and has served two terms as local alderman.

On a Quick Note

- During the first eight months of 1991, AOC authorized 222 loans totalling $20 million.
- 57 AOC loans have been authorized for businesses in Northern Alberta.
- 40 AOC loans have been authorized for businesses in Central Alberta.
- 52 AOC loans have been authorized for businesses in Southern Alberta.
- 41 AOC loans have been authorized for businesses in Edmonton.
- 32 AOC loans have been authorized for businesses in Calgary.

AOC ALBERTA OPPORTUNITY COMPANY Turning Opportunity into Enterprise